

The Old Paths

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"Overlooking Prospective Converts"

Jarrod Jacobs

A lament I hear from folks at times is the fact that "we" are "not converting more people." Some older acquaintances of mine sometimes reminisce about by-gone days when folks were converted to the Lord by the "dozens" in gospel meetings, and how this is not happening today. Usually in conversations like these, a statement will be made to the effect that "we" are only "converting our own".

Have you heard people speak like this? What do you think when you hear such things? I have thought much about these charges, and have come to the conclusion that such people: 1) Help no one in their comments. 2) Have overlooked a large group of prospective converts that need to be saved.

What large group of prospective converts are overlooked by our concerned friends? This large group is our CHILDREN and other FAMILY members!! I mean, do they not have souls? Do they not need to be saved from sin (Rom. 3:23)? Do they not have value or worth? Yet, when people disparage the fact that we are, "only converting our own", then what is that saying about these dear ones? Are their souls not of equal value to the "strangers" in the community?

Please understand, I am not writing this article to negate the good work done in foreign fields, or to somehow squelch our efforts to convert neighbors, friends, and strangers in town. Their souls have worth (Matt. 16:26). I am just begging that we be balanced and stop ignoring one group of precious souls in favor of others.

Please take a moment and consider the emphasis the Bible places upon teaching our own family members. Let us begin with Noah (Gen. 6-8). The Bible describes him as a "preacher of righteousness" (II Pet. 2:5). Evidently, in addition to building the ark, Noah was preaching righteousness to the people and warning them of the coming Flood. Yet, had Noah not convinced his wife and his children's families, concerning God's judgment and the coming Flood, he would have entered the Ark by himself (Heb. 11:6; I Pet. 3:20)! Was Noah a failure? Will we now disparage Noah because "all he could do" was "convert his own"? I know what God said about his work (Ezek. 14:14-20). What say you?

Let us read John 1:40-42. "*One of the two who heard John speak and followed Jesus was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother. He first found his own brother Simon and said to him, 'We have found the Messiah' (which means Christ). He brought him to Jesus. Jesus looked at him and said, 'So you are Simon the son of John? You shall be called Cephas' (which means Peter).'*" Because Andrew was concerned

about "converting his own," we have the blessings of the confession Peter made (Matt. 16:16) the preaching of Peter (Acts 2-11), and the letters of Peter to Christians. Let us be thankful that Andrew showed such an interest in his brother. Had Andrew had the mentality of some, and looked disparagingly upon converting "his own", who knows when the apostle Peter might have been introduced to the Lord!

Further, we remember that one of the qualifications of elders is to have "*believing children*" (Titus 1:6). It is necessary that a man who would be an elder be instrumental in instructing his children in the truth (I Tim. 3:4-5). At the same time, did we notice that nothing is said in this context about how many strangers or "outsiders" from the world he has won to Christ? Instead, the emphasis is placed upon the family life of this man who would be an elder/overseer over God's flock!

In addition to the above, consider such people as Eunice, Lois, Cornelius, Lydia, the Philippian Jailer, Aristobulus, Narcissus, Rufus, and Nereus. What do these people have in common? It is that each one of these people had family members who were brought to the Lord. (See: Acts 16:1-5; II Tim. 1:5; Acts 10-11, 16:14-15, 25-34; Rom. 16:10, 11, 13, 15) What if these people were not active in this work? What if they were more focused on the souls "out there" than they were the souls right in their own "back yard"? Are we guilty of overlooking prospective converts? Are we missing the forest for the trees?

Let me repeat that I am not disparaging man's efforts to reach "strangers" and folks in the world with the truth. By no means! We MUST do this (Mk.

16:15; I Thess. 1:8; II Tim. 4:2-5; etc.). Yet, let us also be balanced and remember our children and other members of our families have souls that need salvation also. Yes, even those “brought up in the church” will be lost if we are so focused on folks “out there” that we never teach the ones “right here” and they are never obedient to the truth (Mk. 16:16)!

For those who lament the fact that “we” are “losing our young people”, is it possible that we are losing them because we did not take the time to teach them concerning what is necessary to be “saved” while we could? Were we focused on them when we should have been? I hope so! Let us not be guilty of overlooking prospective converts.

You Finish The Story ...

Selected

There was once a congregation in which every member was just like you. Each one cooperated and supported every phase of the work just like you. Everyone worked as hard and attended the same services and gospel meetings that you did. The elders, deacons, and preacher were all as interested in the church as you are. They put the same emphasis on recreation, business, and other material affairs that you do. Each member contributed monetarily just like you do. Within a year or so, the congregation

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“What Ruins A Good Influence?”

“Sound Doctrine”, September 26, 1999

- ✎ Inconsistency (Romans 2:21)
- ✎ Appearance of evil (I Thessalonians 5:22)
- ✎ Avoiding people (I Corinthians 7:12, 16)
- ✎ Being unreliable (Acts 15:38)
- ✎ Having an uncontrolled tongue (Ecclesiastes 5:3)
- ✎ Being conceited (III John 9-10)
- ✎ Always complaining (Jude 16)
- ✎ Avoiding opportunities to make peace (Romans 14:19)
- ✎ Never admitting when wrong (Proverbs 12:15)

Brethren, what kind of influence are WE having on the world, on our children, and those who love us?

(Matthew 5:16)

An Eye-Opening Appeal ...

The following is an excerpt from an address by the cardinals in the Roman Church to Pope Pius III. (*Note: Pius III lived in 1503.*)

“Of all the advice that we can offer, Your Holiness, we must open your eyes well and use all possible force in the matter, namely, to permit the reading of the gospel as little as possible in all the countries under your jurisdiction. Let the very little part of the gospel suffice which is usually read in mass, and let no one be permitted to read more. So long as people will be content with the small amount, your interest will prosper; but as soon as the people want to read more, your interest will fail. The Bible is the book, which more than any other, has raised against us the tumults and tempests by which we have almost perished. In fact, if one compares the teachings of the Bible with what takes place in our churches, he will soon find discord, and will realize that our teachings are often different from the Bible, and oftener still, contrary to it.”

Speaks volumes, doesn't it?!?

From: The National Library of Paris, folio No. 1068, Vol. 2, pp 650 and 651.

My Source: *The Sower*, Vol. 51, No. 5, September/October 2006

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